

Remarks Honoring the 2011 Major League Soccer Champion LA Galaxy
May 15, 2012

Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House, everybody. And congratulations to the LA Galaxy on your third MLS Cup—number three.

Before we start, I want to acknowledge an L.A. native and my outstanding Secretary of Labor—I don't know how her game is, but she's a fan—Hilda Solis is here. We've got some proud members of the California delegation of the House of Representatives who are here. We're thrilled to have them.

I'm not going to flatter myself by assuming these cameras are for me. *[Laughter]* I want to thank the Galaxy for letting me share in the spotlight. The truth is, in America, most professional soccer players have the luxury of being able to walk around without being recognized, but not these guys. This is the Miami Heat of soccer. And together, they—*[laughter]*—together they represent one of the most talented lineups that MLS has ever seen.

You've got Robbie Keane, all-time leading scorer of the Irish national team. Cousin of mine. *[Laughter]* Robbie arrived halfway through last season, scored his first goal in the first 21 minutes of his first game. His teammates were so happy to have him that they filled his locker with what they called the pleasures of Ireland: Guinness, Baileys, and Irish Spring. *[Laughter]* Hopefully Robbie has broadened their horizons a little bit since then.

We also have a young up-and-comer on the team, a guy named David Beckham. *[Laughter]* I have to say I gave David a hard time. I said half his teammates could be his kids. *[Laughter]* We're getting old, David, although you're holding up better than me.

Last year, at the age of 36, David had his best year in MLS, leading the team with 15 assists. He did it despite fracturing his spine halfway through the season, injuring his hamstring the week before the championship game. He is tough. In fact, it is a rare man who can be that tough on the field and also have his own line of underwear. *[Laughter]* David Beckham is that man. *[Laughter]*

And then there's the captain, Landon Donovan, who has done more for American soccer than just about anybody. Landon's eye for the net, his will to win are legendary, and once again, he stepped up when his teammates needed him most.

After going undefeated at home last season, the Galaxy was struggling in the cold and rainy championship match. But then, in the 72d minute, David headed the ball to Robbie, who made the perfect pass to Landon, who chipped in the game winner. And that set off an all-night celebration in L.A., although my understanding is that David had to get up for carpool duty at 8 a.m.—*[laughter]*—so his day was ending a little early.

So the big names came through in the clutch, but they didn't do it alone. For a group with so much firepower, this team shone on defense, recording 17 shutouts. They were led by two local guys, Omar Gonzalez—give it up—*[applause]*—and A.J. DeLaGarza, who won a national championship at Maryland. Now they've got another title to their resumes.

And of course, a lot of credit goes to Coach Bruce Arena. He took this team from worst to first in just 4 years. And I want to take this opportunity to apologize to Bruce. When I called to

congratulate him on winning the Cup, the team was in Indonesia; it was in the middle of the night. Thank you for taking my call and acting like you actually wanted to talk to me.

[*Laughter*]

So everyone who's a part of this club—the staff, the players, the fans back in L.A.—together, you pulled off one of the toughest feats in team sports: You lived up to the hype. You combined star power, hard work; it paid off. And I also want to thank you for doing a little Q&A with some of the younger players after we're done. As a soccer dad, I know you've inspired a lot of kids. And today you're giving them an experience that they will never forget.

So again, give a big round of applause to the LA Galaxy. Congratulations. Best of luck this season.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Robbie Keane, forward, David Beckham and Landon Donovan, midfielders, and Omar Gonzalez and A.J. DeLaGarza, defenders, LA Galaxy.

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